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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hearing to be broadcast live on the Internet:

DPC WILL HOLD HEARING APRIL 5 ON GROWING CONCENTRATION IN AGRICULTURE MARKETS

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) --- U.S. Senators Tom Daschle (D-SD) and Byron Dorgan (D-ND) announced Thursday that the Senate Democratic Policy Committee (DPC) will conduct a hearing to explore the impact on family farmers, rural communities, and consumers of the growing concentration of agriculture markets. The hearing will be held Wednesday, April 5 in Room 216 of the Hart Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C.

North Dakotans can view the hearing, which begins at 9:00 a.m. Central Time, live via the Internet at dpc.senate.gov.

According to Senator Dorgan, who chairs the DPC and Daschle who is the Senate Democratic Leader, the hearing is the second in a series of hearings the committee is holding to explore consequences of the failed 1996 "Freedom to Farm" program. The DPC hearings are also examining ideas for a new farm program which Senate Democrats hope to enact this year to replace "Freedom to Farm."

The hearings are necessary, they added, because of the devastating impact the failed farm program has on family farmers, and because the Senate's Agriculture Committee refuses to schedule hearings to examine how the "Freedom to Farm" program is working.

Farm producers who have felt the impact of accelerating concentration of farm markets and experts who have studied farm markets and the effect of less and less competition within those markets are scheduled to testify.

U.S. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), the Ranking Democrat on the Senate Agriculture Committee who has pushed actively for a response to the growing farm market concentration problem, will take part in the hearing. Other U.S. Senators who have been active in the drive to re-write the farm program and who are expected to participate in the DPC hearing include: Kent Conrad (ND), Bob Kerrey (NE), Max Baucus (MT), Tim Johnson (SD), Paul Wellstone (MN), Blanche Lincoln (AR), Herb Kohl (WI), Dick Durbin (IL), Jeff Bingaman (NM), Russ Feingold (WI), Patty Murray (WA), Jack Reed (RI), John Edwards (NC), Charles Schumer (NY), Robert Torricelli (NJ), John Breaux (LA) and others.

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